

IN THE CLAIMS

19. (Withdrawn) A method of operating gaming devices interconnected by a computer network to a host computer comprising:

- detecting a player associated with a gaming device;
- sending a player identification number from the gaming device to the host computer over the network;
- sending a status request from the host computer to a gaming device;
- transmitting accounting data from the gaming device to the host computer over the same network; and
- associating the accounting data with the player identification number for player tracking purposes.

20. (Withdrawn) A method of operating gaming devices according to claim 19 further comprising reconfiguring a gaming device over the network, wherein the reconfigured gaming device modifies a jackpot payout schedule associated therewith.

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62. (Original) A method of operating gaming devices interconnected by a computer network to a host computer comprising:

- selecting a plurality of the gaming devices;
- using the network to track the amount of money played on the selected gaming devices;
- allocating a predetermined percentage of the money played to a bonus pool;
- initiating a bonus period after the bonus pool exceeds a predetermined level;
- providing data establishing criteria to cause a bonus to be paid from the pool via one of said selected gaming devices upon the occurrence of a predetermined event;
- storing the data in a memory connected to a controller associated with only one of the gaming devices;
- transmitting data indicative of gaming device activity from the gaming device to the controller;
- transmitting a pay command from the controller to the gaming device upon the occurrence of the predetermined event only if a bonus period has been initiated; and

paying the bonus via the gaming device responsive to receipt of the pay command.

63. (Original) The method of claim 62 wherein the predetermined event comprises a predetermined transaction at the gaming device.

64. (Original) The method of claim 63 wherein said predetermined transaction comprises making a wager at the gaming device.

65. (Original) The method of claim 63 wherein said predetermined transaction comprises a handle pull at the gaming device.

66. (Original) The method of claim 62 wherein providing data establishing criteria to cause a bonus to be paid from the pool via one of said selected gaming devices upon the occurrence of a predetermined event comprises providing data causing a bonus to be paid from the pool via one of said selected gaming devices only if predetermined minimum gaming device play is achieved.

67. (Original) The method of claim 62 wherein said predetermined event comprises transmission of a pay command from the host computer to the controller.

77. (Original) A method of operating gaming devices configured to play a preselected game interconnected by a computer network to a host computer comprising:
permitting players to play the preselected game at the gaming services;
paying to each device in accordance with a payout table stored in the device after each game;
monitoring the activity of the gaming devices;
detecting the amount of money played on the gaming devices;
allocating a predetermined percentage of the money played to a bonus pool;
determining the level of the bonus pool;
initiating a bonus period after the bonus pool exceeds a predetermined level;
permitting continuing to pay to each device in accordance with the payout table after initiating the bonus period; and

paying a bonus to at least one of the gaming devices responsive to the occurrence of a predetermined event after initiating the bonus period.

78. (Original) The method of claim 68 wherein said method further comprises: detecting the amount of money paid as bonuses on the gaming devices; modifying the bonus pool by the amount of money paid as bonuses; determining the level of the bonus pool; and deactivating the bonus payout table in the gaming device after the bonus pool level falls below a turn-off level.

79. (Original) The method of claim 78 wherein said turn-on level is above said turn-off level.

80. (Original) The method of claim 77 wherein initiating a bonus period comprises transmitting a command over the network to the gaming devices.

81. (Original) The method of claim 77 wherein initiating predetermined event comprises a jackpot paid at one of the gaming devices.

82. (Original) The method of claim 77 wherein the predetermined event comprises random selection of one of the gaming devices.

83. (Original) The method of claim 77 wherein paying a bonus to at least one of the gaming devices comprises paying a bonus to a gaming device responsive to a pay command transmitted from the host computer over the network.

84. (Original) The method of claim 77 wherein said method further includes: defining bonus eligibility criteria; and paying a bonus only to gaming devices which meet the criteria.

85. (Original) The method of claim 84 wherein the criteria comprises a minimum level of gaming device play.

86. (Original) The method of claim 85 wherein said method further comprises indicating to the player of the gaming device whether or not the gaming device is eligible to be paid a bonus.

87. (Original) The method of claim 77 wherein said method further comprises: determining the level of play for a gaming device; preventing a bonus from being paid to the gaming device when the level of play falls below a predetermined level.

88. (Previously added) A progressive gaming system comprising:
a central computer coupled, at least indirectly, to gaming terminals each of which is coupled to a notification device for indicating the win of a progressive prize;
a first plurality of said gaming terminals being eligible for a first progressive prize, based on first contributions from said first plurality of gaming terminals;
a second plurality of said gaming terminals being eligible for a second progressive prize, based on second contributions from said second plurality of gaming terminals;
said central computer receiving information regarding said first contributions and transmitting information, when said first progressive prize has been won, to indicate a win using said notification device coupled to one of said first plurality of gaming terminals; and
said central computer receiving information regarding said second contributions and transmitting information when said second progressive prize has been won, to indicate a win using said notification device coupled to one of said second plurality of gaming terminals;
wherein the same said central computer calculates both the amount of said first progressive prize, when said first progressive prize has been won, and the amount of said second progressive prize, when said second progressive prize has been won.

89. (Previously added) A progressive gaming system, as claimed in claim 88, wherein said first and second pluralities of gaming terminals have at least one gaming terminal in common.

90. (Previously added) A progressive gaming system, as claimed in claim 88, further comprising a cluster controller which receives contribution information from at least some of said first plurality of gaming terminals and transmits said information regarding said first contributions to said central computer.

91. (Previously added) A progressive gaming system comprising a central computer coupled, at least indirectly, to gaming terminals each of which is coupled to a notification device for indicating the win of a progressive prize;

a first plurality of said gaming terminals being eligible for a first progressive prize, based on first contributions from said first plurality of gaming terminals;

a second plurality of said gaming terminals being eligible for a second progressive prize, based on second contributions from said second plurality of gaming terminals;

said central computer receiving information regarding said first contributions and transmitting information, when said first progressive prize has been won, to indicate a win using said notification device coupled to one of said first plurality of gaming terminals; and

said central computer receiving information regarding said second contributions and transmitting information, when said second progressive prize has been won, to indicate a win using said notification device coupled to one of said second plurality of gaming terminal;

wherein each of said first plurality of gaming terminals, following play on said gaming terminal, provides an output indicative of a result of said play;

wherein said central computer repeatedly receives, stores or transmits information indicative of a decision as to whether said first progressive prize has been won; and

wherein said decision is independent of said result of play in any of said first plurality of gaming terminals.

92. (Previously added) A progressive gaming system as claimed in claim 91 wherein a decision that said first progressive prize has been won is made only after an event selected from the group consisting of a push of a button, a predetermined result from a spin of a wheel of fortune, and a draw of a predetermined token from a plurality of tokens.

93. (Previously added) A method for providing a progressive gaming system implemented using central computer coupled, at least indirectly, to gaming terminals each of which is coupled to a notification device for indicating the win of a progressive prize, the method comprising:

receiving, in said central computer, first information indicating contributions towards a first progressive prize from a first plurality of said gaming terminals eligible for said progressive prize;

receiving, in said central computer, second information indicating contributions towards a second progressive prize from a second plurality of said gaming terminals eligible for said second progressive prize;

transmitting from said central computer, when said first progressive prize has been won, information for activating at least one notification device coupled to one of said first plurality of gaming terminals; and

transmitting from said central computer, when said second progressive prize has been won, information for activating at least one notification device coupled to one of said second plurality of gaming terminals.

94. (Previously added) A method, as claimed in claim 93, wherein said first and second pluralities of gaming terminals have at least one gaming terminal in common.

95. (Previously added) A method, as claimed in claim 93, further comprising: receiving, in a cluster controller, contribution information from at least some of said first plurality of gaming terminals and transmitting said information regarding said first contributions from said cluster controller to said central computer.

96. (Previously added) A method as claimed in claim 93, further comprising: providing output, by each of said first plurality of gaming terminals, following play on said gaming terminal, indicative of a result of said play; and repeatedly transmitting information to said central computer indicative of a decision as to whether said first progressive prize has been won wherein said decision is independent of said result of play in any of said first plurality of gaming terminals.

97. (Previously added) A method, as claimed in claim 96 wherein a decision that said first progressive prize has been won is made only after an event selected from the group consisting of a push of a button, a predetermined result from a spin of a wheel of fortune, and a draw of a predetermined token from a plurality of tokens.

98. (Previously added) Apparatus for providing a progressive gaming system implemented using a central computer coupled, at least indirectly, to gaming terminals each of which is coupled to a notification device for indicating the win of a progressive prize, the apparatus comprising:

means, in said central computer, for:

receiving, first information indicating contributions towards a first progressive prize from a first plurality of said gaming terminals eligible for said first progressive prize; and

receiving, second information indicating contributions towards a second progressive prize from a second plurality of said gaming terminals eligible for said second progressive prize; and

means, in said central computer, for:

transmitting from said central computer, when said first progressive prize has been won, information for activating at least one notification device coupled to one of said first plurality of gaming terminals; and

transmitting from said central computer, when said second progressive prize has been won, information for activating at least one notification device coupled to one of said second plurality of gaming terminals.